

BOOK REVIEW

RICHARD DWIGHT PORCHER and DOUGLAS ALAN RAYNER. 2001. **A Guide to the Wildflowers of South Carolina**. (ISBN 1-57003-437-0, hbk.). University of South Carolina, 718 Devine Street, Columbia, SC 29208, U.S.A. (Orders: 800-768-2500, 800-768-0740 fax). \$49.95, 551 pp, 11 figures, numerous color photos, 7" × 10 1/4".

This book is near the top of the 'must-have' list for anyone interested in plants and plant communities of the eastern United States. The range of subject matter is far broader than implied by the title—so much so that one has to wonder at the title selection. The wildflower photos and brief accompanying descriptions (about 700 species) occupy a little more than half of the 551 total pages—the remainder provides a wealth of information on aspects of botany and plant communities in South Carolina. The book could easily serve as the primary basis for courses in plant taxonomy, plant communities, or related topics, especially as supplemented by "Natural Vegetation of South Carolina" (J.M. Barry 1980) and "Wildflowers of the Carolina Low Country and Lower Pee Dee" (Porcher 1995).

With this nearly unmitigated commendation in introduction, an outline of the chapters conveys a quick overview:

- Introduction
- Natural History of Selected Groups of Vascular Plants (including carnivorous plants, native orchids, poisonous plants, woody vines, epiphytic, saprophytic, and parasitic plants, medicinal plants and folk remedies, edible wild plants, naturalized plants, and duckweeds)
- History of Field Botany in South Carolina
- Selected Topics on Natural History and Ecology (including 'Succession in Natural Communities,' 'Fire in the South Carolina Landscape, Carolina Bays of the Coastal Plain, 'Reproductive Strategies of Vascular Plants,' 'Economic and Cultural Notes,' 'Longleaf Pine and the Naval Stores Industry,' 'Agriculture and Forestry: Effects on South Carolina's Physical Landscape,' and 'Marshes, Swamps, Peatlands, Bogs, and Fens')
- South Carolina's Natural Wildflower Communities (The Mountains, The Piedmont, The Fall-Line Sandhills, The Coastal Plain, The Maritime Strand; numerous subdivisions in each category)
- Species Descriptions and Color Plates (divided into the same 'natural communities' and numerous subdivisions to match the preceding chapter, with the addition of 'The Ruderal Communities')
- Field Guide to Natural Plant Communities (also divided first by community type, then by county—then, for those wanting to walk through the real thing, various natural area preserves, State Parks, and National Forests are identified and discussed under individual counties)
- Indices and other "end" pieces (including keys to selected plant groups, a guide to South Carolina herbaria, references, common and scientific names, and a "general index")

I register only a single objection—if one is trying to match a plant in hand with a photo in the book, an inordinate amount of page-flipping may be required. The photographs and brief notes on individual species are arranged first by community and then by some other criterion that is not clear to me. Even within one community, species of a single family are not grouped together. This objection, however, must show a personal bias of mine, because other recent books (including the earlier S.C. volume by Porcher, noted above) are published with the same format, the much-experienced authors (Porcher & Rayner) explicitly intend the book to be a field guide, and apparently inexperienced students find the arrangement useful.—Guy L. Nesom, *Botanical Research Institute of Texas*, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX, 76102-4060, U.S.A.